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ABSTRACT

The Title VII Bilingual Education Act was enacted in 1968 and reauthorized in 1988 to counteract the low academic achievement of limited-English-proficient students (LEPs). Through a competitive grant program, funds are provided to local education agencies (LEAs) to establish programs to serve LEP students. Based on findings of a national study that examined the impact of Title VII grants on LEA capacity building, i.e., the institutionalization of effective strategies for serving LEP populations, this paper describes respondents' perceptions of the capacity-building effectiveness of their districts. Four self-administered questionnaires were mailed to 201 superintendents, 204 project directors, and 322 principals from 550 school districts with project grants for the 1987-88 academic year. A total of 205 usable responses were obtained. Approximately one-half of the three groups combined reported that their districts' capacity-building efforts had been very effective. However, the majority of principals rated their districts as "somewhat effective." Each group shared similar and accurate perceptions of program accomplishments, which included identifying and assessing LEP students, recruiting and training bilingual staff, developing bilingual materials, integrating students with regular instructional programs, and securing mainstream support. Two tables are included. (LMI)

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Comparing Superintendents', Title VII Directors', and School Principals' Perceptions of Capacity Building Success

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Comparing Superintendents', Title VII Directors', and School Principals' Perceptions of Capacity Building Success

The Title VII Bilingual Education Act was first enacted in 1968 and reauthorized in 1988 to counteract the low academic achievement of limited English proficient students (LEPs). Through a competitive grant program, funds are provided to a small number of local education agencies (LEAs) for the purpose of establishing programs to serve LEP students. Local education agencies are expected to develop strategies and processes to insure that the district continues or expands its services to LEP students when Federal assistance under the project is no longer available. As such, one of the objectives of Title VII is "capacity building", or the institutionlization of effective strategies for serving LEP students. At the LEA level, insitutionalization means that LEP instructional support mechanisms started with Title VII are incorporated into the regular operating procedures of the LEA. To achieve this objective, Title VII grant applicants are required to delineate plans to absorb proposed program costs upon termination of Title VII funding (Kim & Lucas, 1992).

Items on a list of criteria used to describe capacity building may include:

- the extent to which specific aspects of LEP instructional programs originally funded through a Title VII project are maintained by State and local funding;

- the extent to which educational personnel are recruited, trained, or retrained to serve LEP instructional programs; and
- the extent to which LEA policies and budgets reflect a commitment to identify and serve LEP students.

Additional capacity building efforts may also address: materials development, parent involvement, and LEP student identification and assessment.

This paper is based on a national research project examining the impact of Title VII grants on LEA capacity building. ARC Associates, under contract with the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs, conducted a study of Bilingual Instructional Service Capacity Among Title VII Grantees. The study was carried out in three phases from September 1989 through January 1992, each reflecting a specific purpose:

1. To conduct a nationwide survey that described both the capacity building status of Title VII grant-supported instructional programs for LEP students and the circumstances that led to that status.

2. To identify and select a number of school districts with Title VII instructional programs which had been particularly successful in their capacity building efforts.

3. To conduct extensive case studies of 20 selected districts that were successful in capacity building, describing the circumstances, conditions, and strategies that led to their success.

The present study examines data from the first phase of the study, a nationwide survey summarizing the impact of Title VII grants on LEA capacity building. Specifically, it compares survey respondents' perceptions of capacity building effectiveness within their districts. Similarities and variations in opinions between superintendents, project directors, and principals are compared across two questions found in all three LEA questionnaires. The pattern of responses helps highlight the different perspectives personnel in these administrative positions had of the processes and outcomes of their capacity building efforts.

Method

This section describes the study's participants, the type of research design employed, the instruments used to gather information, and how the study was conducted. Additional information on the study's methodology and findings may be found in the contract reports *National Survey of Title VII Bilingual Education Capacity Building Efforts* (Kim & Lucas, 1991) and *Descriptive Analysis of Bilingual Instructional Service Capacity Building Among Title VII Grantees - Final Report* (Kim & Lucas, 1992).

Subjects

The sample for the survey phase of the original study included all classroom instruction project grants funded for the 1987-88 academic year. In this baseline year, approximately 550 projects were in various stages of funding, ranging from the first year to the fifth year in the funding cycle. Only cases with responses from all three LEA groups in the same district were used in this paper's analysis. The study sample consisted of 205 districts which returned usable questionnaires for all three respondent groups. Responses were obtained from 203 superintendents, 204 project directors, and 322 principals.

Design

In the first phase of the study, a nationwide survey of capacity building efforts by the Title VII recipients was conducted to provide the Department of Education with a summary description of the capacity building impact of Title VII grants. The target population of the survey was all instructional projects that received Title VII funds for the 1987-88 academic year. In this baseline year, approximately 550 projects were in various stages of funding, ranging from the first year to the fifth year in the funding cycle. All of them, however, had at least three years of Title VII experience by the time the survey was conducted in 1990-91. In addition to the LEAs, all state education agency (SEA) bilingual education directors were surveyed (Kim & Lucas, 1991). In this paper, only matched respondent cases for project directors, superintendents, and

principals within the same district were used in the analysis; state education responses were not included in the study.

Instruments

Four self-administered mail survey questionnaires were developed and used for the four respondent groups: one each for project directors, school district superintendents, principals, and SEA directors of bilingual education. One *Project Director Questionnaire* was filled out by each project director regardless of the number of Title VII projects he/she currently directs or directed in the past. One *Superintendent Questionnaire* was filled out by the school superintendent or his/her designee for the LEA. The *Principal Questionnaire* was filled out by principals of no more than two schools that are or were served through the Title VII project. The *State Director of Bilingual Education Questionnaire* was filled out by the state director/cordinator of bilingual programs or his/her designee. The State Director Questionnaire does not contain the survey questions of interest in this study and thus is not included in the present analysis.

The surveys were designed and field tested to collect data from various sources on program characteristics and capacity building achievement. Most questions asked respondents for factual information regarding their program, district/school, and capacity building efforts. Respondents were also asked to provide their own opinions about the success of district capacity building efforts through two questions included in all three LEA survey forms. One asked about their overall opinions on the effectiveness of the

district's efforts and the other asked them to rate on a 5-point scale the degree of success that their districts had achieved in each of 10 specific areas of capacity building. The present study analyzes the following two opinion questions addressed by all LEA respondent groups:

1) How effective do you believe the capacity building efforts in your district to serve LEP students have been? *"Capacity building" refers to the efforts of a LEA Title VII grantee to develop strategies and processes to insure that the district continues or expands its services to LEP students when Federal assistance under the project is no longer available.*

___ 1. Very effective
___ 2. Somewhat effective
___ 3. Ineffective
___ 4. Don't know

2) The items listed below are associated with capacity building to serve LEP students. Please rate each item to indicate the degree of success your district Title VII efforts have achieved in each area. (Circle one number on each line)

	Much Success		Some Success		Little Success	Don't Know
1. Identifying and assessing LEP students	5	4	3	2	1	0
2. Recruiting and training bilingual staff	5	4	3	2	1	0
3. Developing and acquiring bilingual materials	5	4	3	2	1	0
4. Adopting appropriate instructional approaches/strategies	5	4	3	2	1	0

5. Integrating the bilingual program with the regular instructional program	5	4	3	2	1	0
6. Securing support of mainstream teachers and principals	5	4	3	2	1	0
7. Securing support of district administration and School Board	5	4	3	2	1	0
8. Informing and involving parents	5	4	3	2	1	0
9. Informing and involving community members, business, and industry	5	4	3	2	1	0
10. Securing financial resources other than Title VII funds	5	4	3	2	1	0

Procedure

A mail survey method was used as the means of data collection for the national survey. Questionnaires were mailed out the last week of October, 1990; reminder postcards were mailed in mid-November to all non-respondents. Additional attempts to contact nonrespondents on the phone were made during the first two weeks of December, and in January and February of 1991. If additional questionnaires were needed, they were mailed immediately.

Results

All three respondent groups were asked their opinions regarding the overall effectiveness of the district capacity building efforts. When analyzed across groups, about half of the project directors, superintendents, and principals said they believed the capacity building efforts of their district had been "very effective"

and slightly less said "somewhat effective". A very small percentage of the respondents (less than 3%) thought their district efforts had been ineffective. When analyzed by subgroup, superintendents and project directors had very similar opinions, with over half rating their district's capacity building efforts as "very effective". Principals gave their district's slightly lower marks, with the majority rating their district's capacity building efforts as "somewhat effective". A greater percentage of principals indicated not knowing the overall effectiveness of their district's capacity building efforts than project directors and superintendents. A very small percentage of the respondents (4% or less of each respondent group) thought their district efforts had been ineffective. The Kruskal-Wallis test, a one-way analaysis of variance by ranks, was used to test whether the three respondent groups were from different populations. The H statistic, corrected for ties, was significant ($H=25.5$, $p < .001$). Table 1 lists the percent of respondents selecting each effectiveness category.

Table 1

Opinions on Overall Effectiveness of District Capacity Building Efforts

	Percent			
Effectiveness	PD	S	P	All
Very effective	57.3	59.1	44.5	52.2
Somewhat effective	38.7	38.4	47.0	42.3
Ineffective	4.0	2.0	2.8	2.9
Don't know	0	.5	5.6	2.6

LEA staff were also asked to rate the degree of success that their Title VII efforts had achieved in each of 10 capacity building areas on a 5-point scale, 5 representing "much success" and 1 representing "little success". With all three respondent groups considered together, Title VII projects were most successful in identifying and assessing LEP students (M=4.6). They were also somewhat successful in the areas of securing support of district administration and school boards (M=4.2), adopting appropriate instructional approaches and strategies (M=4.1), and developing or acquiring bilingual materials (M=4.0). Title VII projects were least successful in the areas of informing and involving community members, business, and industry (M=3.2) and securing financial resources other than the Title VII funds (M=2.9). There was little difference in the mean ratings or the rank order of capacity building criteria across the three groups.

Analysis of variance was used to examine mean group differences in each capacity building area. Significant differences ($p < .05$) were found in four areas: Integrating the bilingual program with the regular instructional program; securing support of mainstream teachers and principals; informing and involving parents; and, securing financial resources other than Title VII funds. Table 2 lists the mean ratings of success in 10 areas of capacity building across the three LEA groups.

Table 2

Mean Ratings of Success in 10 Areas of Capacity Building

	Mean Rating			
Effectiveness	PD	S	P	All
1. Identifying and assessing LEP students	4.7	4.6	4.6	4.6
2. Recruiting and training bilingual staff	3.8	3.7	3.9	3.8
3. Developing and acquiring bilingual materials	4.0	4.1	3.9	4.0
4. Adopting appropriate instructional approaches/strategies	4.0	4.1	4.1	4.1
5. Integrating the bilingual program with the regular instructional program	3.7	3.9	4.1	3.9
6. Securing support of mainstream teachers and principals	3.8	3.9	4.3	4.0
7. Securing support of district administration and School Board	4.0	4.3	4.3	4.2
8. Informing and involving parents	3.9	4.0	3.8	3.9
9. Informing and involving community members, business, and industry	3.0	3.4	3.2	3.2
10. Securing financial resources other than Title VII funds	3.0	3.1	2.7	2.9

Discussion

The results of this study clearly support the proposition that personnel across the administrative positions of superintendent, project director, and principal share similar perspectives about the processes and outcomes of their capacity building efforts. As may be expected in a self-report scale, all respondent groups rated

themselves quite high in every area of capacity building; only one mean rating was below 3.0, a score still above average on a scale from 1-5. Nevertheless, each group still managed to distinguish areas of greater success from those of less success. These distinctions and ranking orders held across all three groups. Of special significance is the fact that findings from the factual information contained in the survey confirm the perceptions held by the three respondent groups. That is, districts were in fact quite successful in the areas of identifying and assessing LEP students, recruiting and training bilingual staff, developing and acquiring bilingual materials, integrating the bilingual program with the regular instructional program, and securing support of mainstream teachers/principals/ administrators/school boards. Districts were least successful in securing financial resources other than Title VII funds.

In general, principals tended to give themselves slightly higher marks for areas under school control (e.g., integrating the bilingual program, securing support of mainstream teachers and principals). Superintendents rated themselves slightly higher in areas under administrative control, e.g., being able to secure financial resources other than Title VII, securing support of administration and school boards, and informing parents. Project director rankings varied across areas. Overall, project directors gave their districts slightly lower ratings than principals and superintendents. Slight variations in the findings may reflect differences in the amount of first-hand exposure each respondent has with the workings of Title VII. Principals may have limited knowledge of the impact of Title VII across the district but a very good idea within an individual school. Superintendents are likely to have more general knowledge of Title VII impact in the district. Project directors are likely informed of both the administrative and implementation aspects of Title VII, providing a more informed and tempered response.

The data suggest that all three response groups share very similar and quite accurate perceptions of their effectiveness in a number of capacity building areas.

References

Kim, Y. & Lucas, T. (1992). Descriptive Analysis of Bilingual Instructional Service Capacity Building Among Title VII Grantees - Final Report. ARC Associates, Oakland, CA.

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